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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 28, 1940.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "TIPS FOR FOOD SHOPPERS." Information from the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U. S. D. A. and the Consumers' Counsel, A.A.A.

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Once again the Wednesday mailman brings tips for the housewife on the seasonal foods now coming to market. Here are estimates direct from the U. S. Department of Agriculture to help you plan and buy food for family meals.

The foods making headlines right now are the fruits and vegetables hit by the January freeze; milk and eggs; and asparagus. The freeze cut down the oranges, grapefruit, and strawberries as well as a number of the fresh vegetables coming on the market this time of year. It also slowed up the cows and hens temporarily, but the warm weather following brought more milk and eggs to market. The predictions about meat continue the same. Meat, especially pork, will be much more plentiful than last year at this time. The one vegetable taking a bow at the moment is asparagus. This year's asparagus crop is now making its debut. The first shipments of asparagus are just coming to market from California.

Getting back to results of the January freeze, here are some estimates of damage. Jack Frost made off with 8 million boxes of oranges. That's about a tenth of the orange crop. Florida oranges suffered most. Florida produces 2 major crops of oranges. First come the early or midseason oranges which go to market before the end of February. Then come the Valencia oranges. Valencias make up most of the shipments from Florida beginning in February and ending the first of July, when the Florida season closes. The estimates are that the freeze damaged two-thirds of the early and midseason oranges still on the trees, and around a third of the Valencia crop. The damage to the rest of the Florida crop is about

a third, for nearly all the early and midseason oranges have been shipped.

The natural result of all this freezing is that the markets will have fewer oranges to sell until July, at least. The California crop is smaller this year than last, but fortunately the freeze didn't reach California oranges.

For fear careless or dishonest dealers would ship frozen oranges, Florida put an embargo on citrus fruit from the first to the eighth day of February. And since then State and Federal inspectors have been checking all shipments to be sure only good fruit is sold.

The news about grapefruit is that the freeze destroyed 6 million boxes. So the total grapefruit crop will be about a third smaller than last year. Florida and Texas suffered about equally in grapefruit loss.

Among the vegetables snap beans, beets, peppers, spinach and new cabbage took a beating from Jack Frost. Because so many acres of truck crops in the South suffered, the fresh vegetables coming on the market won't be so plentiful the next 6 weeks or so. Growers have replanted many acres, but, of course, the vegetables won't be ready until April or May. However, in April and May you can expect quite a rush of fresh southern vegetables in the grocery stores.

Snap beans are among the vegetables hard hit in Florida. Florida supplies most of the fresh green or wax beans coming to market in February, March and April. Only half as many beans will be on the market this year as last. Nearly 3 million bushels--that's a third of the crop still on the vines--went down before the cold weather in January. The beans planted again after the freeze won't be ready for harvest until the last part of March. Florida green peppers suffered even more than snap beans. Practically all the pepper crop in Florida was lost. So instead of a million bushels of green peppers the winter crop will be only about 40 thousand bushels. During February, March and April most of our fresh green peppers come from Florida.

In Texas beets took a beating from the freeze. Texas supplies most of the fresh young beets and beet greens from February through April. The freeze nipped tender beet tops by the acre so at least a third of the crop is lost.

As for spinach and new cabbage, these vegetables got through a little better. The loss was only about 10 percent. But even so, from 15 to 20 percent less spinach and new cabbage is coming on the market now than last year at this time.

You have probably wondered how the strawberries weathered the freeze. The loss was about a fifth of the berries expected. Since almost all the strawberries you buy from February to April come from Florida, the prospects for strawberry shortcake this season aren't so bright as they were before the freeze. The 1940 crop of strawberries will be only about half as large as last year's crop, and below average.

Now for the last item of food news today. This is the milk and egg news. More milk and more eggs are coming on the market these days as they usually do at this time of year. However, the cold spell checked this seasonal rise in eggs up to the first of February. And it slowed up the usual rise in milk production so that the gain in milk during January was the smallest for any recent year since 1937.

That concludes the tips on food-shopping for today. In a couple of weeks more tips will come in from the Department of Agriculture.

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